

COMMITTEE ON  
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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON  
BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

## United States Senate

June 9, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20420

The Honorable Chuck Rosenberg  
Acting Administrator  
Drug Enforcement Administration  
8701 Morrisette Drive  
Springfield, VA, 22152

Dear Secretary Shulkin and Administrator Rosenberg:

In December 2015, public reports emerged that federal investigators from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) were inspecting the Marion Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Indiana in relation to suspicious opioid prescription activity at the hospital. I am writing to ask you for an update on the status of that investigation and to ensure that both your agencies are cooperating fully with one another to get all the facts and take whatever measures may be necessary to provide Hoosier veterans with the quality health care they deserve.

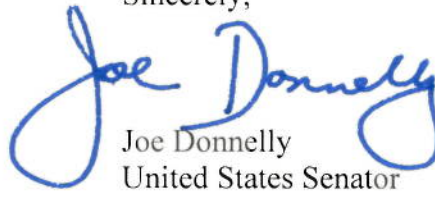
Reports on past opioid prescription rates at the Marion VAMC are cause for ample concern. According to publicly available information, the Marion VAMC purchased significantly larger quantities of opioids than any other medical facility in the area. Despite serving 10,000 fewer patients than the nearby VA health care center in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Marion facility reportedly purchased significantly larger quantities of these highly addictive drugs. For example, in 2014 alone, Marion is reported to have purchased nearly twice as much hydrocodone as the Fort Wayne VAMC.

It is my understanding that the investigation into this troubling activity at the Marion VAMC is still ongoing. I urge you to make every appropriate effort to bring this matter to a responsible conclusion and continue working to restore confidence of VA patients and their loved ones in the care provided at the Marion VAMC. Accordingly, I ask that you respond to the following questions:

- 1) What is the status of the investigation into opioid prescribing practices at the Marion VAMC?
- 2) Do you have any concerns about the progress of the investigation or factors that will impede or unnecessarily delay successful completion of the investigation?
- 3) What actions have been taken at the Marion VAMC to protect against potential improper prescribing practices involving opioids?
- 4) Have you identified any employees who engaged in misconduct in relation to opioid prescribing practices at the Marion VAMC, and if so, what action has been taken to address those findings?
- 5) What efforts have been put in place to ensure patients who may have been overprescribed opioids are receiving appropriate care and support going forward?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Donnelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" and last name "Donnelly" clearly distinguishable.

Joe Donnelly  
United States Senator